

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN at 9.00 am on 12 NOVEMBER 2008

Present: - Councillor A J Ketteridge - Chairman.
Councillors J F Cheetham, E J Godwin and J I Loughlin.

Also Present:- Councillor D J Morson.

Officers in attendance: - S Clarke (Housing and Planning Policy Manager), M Cox (Democratic Services Officer), R Harborough (Acting Director of Development), M Jones (Principal Planning Officer) and S Nicholas (Senior Planning Officer).

LDF26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C A Cant and H S Rolfe.

LDF27 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

LDF28 BUSINESS ARISING

i) Minute LDF23 – Strategic Housing Land Availability study (SHLAA)

Councillor Cheetham reported that she had attended the first meeting of the SHLAA Panel. The Panel comprised developer and community representatives and the aim of the meetings was to identify further sites in the district and assess their suitability for development. She said that it had been a positive meeting and all parties had been committed to helping with the process. However, she felt that because the group was looking at the feasibility of various plots of land, in the interest of public perception of impartiality, it was probably not appropriate for a Council Member to attend future meetings.

ii) Minute – Water Cycle Study

It was confirmed that the tenders had been sent off with a return date of 21 November.

REPORTS FOR ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**i) Progress on LDF**

The group received the Environment Committee report on the progress of the LDF for the meeting on 18 November. It was accompanied by a summary of all the representations that had been received to the 4th option consultation. As yet there was no officer recommendation or analyses of this data although work had recently started on this.

The report set out the issues that the Council would have to take into account when drafting the strategy and gave progress on the various technical studies. Members raised the following matters.

There was concern that when referring to the ecotown proposal the Government was still pushing the figure of 1200 affordable houses. Members questioned the accuracy of this number as it appeared that the figures also included Braintree and Harlow. Suzanna Clarke said that the numbers on the housing list had increased recently to 1300 but this did not necessarily reflect housing need and members asked if there was a way to measure take up of offers to give a clearer reflection of this figure.

Members referred to the recent exhibition on ecotowns and were disappointed that the representatives from DCLOG did not appear to be well briefed on local issues or the District Council targets.

Melanie Jones said that there were some policies within the strategy that the Government Office had identified as being covered in national guidance and could therefore be deleted. This was the case for Countryside Protection policies. The Group thought it was important that these policies remained in the local strategy and to achieve this could be made more Uttlesford focused.

In answer to a question about the extent of involvement of the Government office in the LDF process, members were informed that it examined the process at each key stage to ensure that the Council was following procedures and that the Strategy would be found sound at the end of the process. The Government Office would not express a preference for any particular spatial strategy option, but would assess whether any proposal was soundly based.

b) Ecotowns Consultation

This report set out the Council's proposed response to the next stage of the Government Consultation on Eco towns. This proposed to enable the issues of eco towns to be assessed through the preparation of the local development framework. Members were pleased to note that where a Core Strategy was in preparation, the proposed eco town should be included as an option for consideration but there was no requirement to allocate an ecotown if a better way of meeting future needs could be proved to exist.

This was a 13 week consultation which would be followed by a final PPS which would list the locations that had the potential to be an ecotown.

Members commented that there had already been a lot of work around the 4th option proposal and asked if further studies would be required if the Elsenham proposal was short listed in February. Officers replied that some of the technical studies would look at the implications of the ecotown and this information would be fed into the next stage of the consultation process.

The Chairman thanked officers for their hard work in the preparation of these reports.

The meeting ended at 10.20am